

REMARKS

The claims have been amended to define more clearly over the art of record. In particular, claim 1 has been amended to use the closed language "consisting of", thereby precluding any elements in addition to those recited.

Claims 1-8 and 15 stand rejected as anticipated by Vratacoe et al. U.S. 5,323,702. To the extent that this reference would be applied against claims as presently amended, such a rejection is traversed for the reasons following.

Vratacoe discloses a tubular printing blanket including a metal sleeve 70, a first compressible layer 62 bonded to the sleeve 70, a second compressible layer 64 concentric to the first compressible layer 61, an inextensible layer 66 concentric to the second layer 64, and a rubber printing layer 68 concentric to the inextensible 66. The compressible layers 62 and 64 each contain compressible microspheres 80, 92 and compressible threads 80, 94. The incompressible layer 66 contains inextensible thread 102 wound helically. The printing layer 68 is homogenous. Vratacoe therefore discloses a blanket consisting of four layers on a carrier sleeve, whereas applicant's claim is limited to a single rubber layer on a carrier sleeve. Vratacoe does not even remotely suggest the desired properties of compressibility, stiffness, and low slippage can be achieved with a single rubber layer. Rather, Vratacoe specifically teaches that these properties are achieved with a large number of layers. This is precisely the sort of prior art printing blanket which is discussed in Applicants' background section.

Applicants disclose and claim a rubber blanket with only a single rubber layer, thereby vastly simplifying the construction and overcoming problems attendant the assembly of

multiple layers and the possibility and misalignment and delamination of the layers in the finished blanket.

Hoffmann U.S. 6,484,632 is cited for disclosure of a joint in a rubber layer. Like Vratacoe, Hoffmann discloses multiple rubber layers, and adds nothing to defeat the patentability of claim 1 as presently amended.

Gaworowski U.S. 4,770,928 is cited for its disclosure of bonding an inner rubber layer to a carrier sleeve. Like Vratacoe and Hoffmann, Gaworowski discloses multiple rubber layers, and adds nothing to defeat the patentability of claim 1 as presently amended.

The claims as amended being definite and patentable over the art of record, withdrawal of the rejections and early allowance are solicited. If any objections remain, a call to the undersigned is requested.

It is believed that no fees or charges are required at this time in connection with the present application; however, if any fees or charges are required at this time, they may be charged to our Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 03-2412.

Respectfully submitted,

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